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SUBJECT: RECENT FRENCH MFA PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON IRAN/IAEA

REF: A. (A) STATE 19694

[1](#)B. (B) STATE 19200

[1](#)1. (SBU) We passed non-paper texts in reftels February 28 and 29 to the relevant French MFA officials in the Strategic Affairs and Middle East/North Africa directorates. Although the MFA has not offered any comments on the non-papers, we would note in the interim that the French have been very active in terms of their recent public statements on the Iran nuclear issue via the daily MFA press briefing. Paras 2 and 3 contains official translations of the MFA's most recent statements on the issue as posted to the MFA's website.

[1](#)2. (U) Text of statement of 25 February 2008:

France thanks the director-general of the IAEA and his teams for this new report which attests to the Agency's efforts to shed light on Iran's past and present nuclear activities.

The report shows that Iran, under pressure from the international community, has provided new information in response to questions from the IAEA. But major uncertainties remain, in particular on activities that "could have a military nuclear dimension, which the Agency rightly terms a matter of serious concern."

The Agency sets out these activities in detail, some of which it considers could be part of "research and development activities for nuclear weapons." It consequently emphasizes in its report that it is not in a position to determine the true nature of Iran's nuclear program.

Other complementary information given by Iran raises new questions. The Agency was able to visit new sites where "new generation" centrifuges are being tested; this means an accelerated program of centrifugation whereas these considerable efforts to develop these highly sensitive technologies have no rationale in civilian use.

As the IAEA director-general recalls, it is essential for Iran to comply with all the demands of the international community expressed by the IAEA Board of Governors and UN Security Council, and to restore confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program; the Agency is not in a position to attest to it today.

This requires Iran to give clear, complete and precise answers to questions about its past and present nuclear activities and to give the IAEA the means to verify its answers by the implementation of the Additional Protocol and the other measures of transparency demanded by the Agency. It also implies suspending its enrichment, heavy water and reprocessing related activities as demanded by the IAEA Board of Governors and Security Council.

Our preference is for dialogue and negotiations to resolve the Iranian nuclear problem. We therefore call again on Iran to comply with its international obligations and to permit at last, through the suspension of its sensitive activities, negotiations to start which we earnestly desire.

(U) Text of exchange between journalists and the French MFA spokesperson on Iran/Nuclear issue, 26 February 2008:

Q - In the wake of the report which is being interpreted differently by the major countries and by Iran, the British are now talking about new elements that suggest Iran continued its program to develop its nuclear military potential well after 2003. Did you get information of this nature from the British?
It,s Mr. ElBaradei,s report and that,s the report the British are referring to.

This new report indicates that Iran is pursuing the enrichment activities which, may I remind you, the Security Council has asked it to suspend. All in all, once again the Agency notes that the absence of answers from Iran on militarization does not answer all the questions we,re asking. The working plan isn,t closed. We remain concerned at the accelerated Iranian program of centrifugation and the new elements concerning the militarization of the Iran program only add to our concern.

So, the IAEA report does not re-establish the confidence which is indispensable between Iran and the rest of the international community.

Until Iran complies with its international obligations, we will continue our policy which combines, as you know,

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dialogue and firmness.

Q - The draft resolution is still due to be voted on Thursday?
We do have a draft resolution. I don,t know whether it will be this Thursday, but the talks are continuing in the Security Council. We hope we,ll manage to move to a vote on a resolution as quickly as possible.

(...)

The IAEA secretariat yesterday essentially presented the "alleged studies" on the weaponization of the Iranian program which Iran has refused to answer.

These "alleged studies" tally with the various information the IAEA has, its own observations, intelligence about the acquisition of specific sensitive goods by Iran and information from third countries.

As I told you, the elements presented at this meeting in Vienna continue to be a source of deep concern, and the British diplomat you referred to a moment ago was alluding to this.

Q - Do you agree with the Iranians who are talking in all the capitals, in Paris and other places, claiming they answered the six outstanding questions as the IAEA demands? (...)

What Iran says isn,t new. For our part, we stand by what the Agency has said. Mr. ElBaradei and the Agency have done what we asked them to. They,ve asked the Iranians questions in accordance with what the IAEA Board of Governors and UN Security Council requested.

So far, we have not obtained all the complete, clear, specific answers we expect.

This is what the IAEA tells us in the last report which has been made public, and as I,ve said, we are still not

satisfied. Confidence hasn't been restored, and we're continuing to work on a new sanctions resolution at the UN.

Q - The Iranians have asked for more time to respond to the documents which came from the Americans, which they say were shown at the last minute by Mr. ElBaradei. Do you think these American documents are credible? Did you base yourself on these documents to formulate your position and what are the difficulties at this point in getting an agreement among the E3 3?

With regard to your first question, I've no knowledge of what you're referring to. As I've told you before, what matters to us are facts, and the facts are those ascertained by the Agency. It has explained itself.

As for your other question, the discussions are in New York. We don't make public what goes on between the members of the Security Council. We hope that an agreement is reached and at that point naturally we'll brief you on the result.

Q - The Iranian president threatened France with reprisals yesterday. Any comment?

I've not heard of such statements from the Iranian president. We still hope that we'll have dialogue with the Iranians and that confidence will be re-established through this dialogue.

The sole purpose of our work, the work of the international community, on sanctions is to re-establish dialogue. It is in the interest of all, the Iranians and the international community as a whole.

Q - What was the basis of your decision for freezing Iranian assets yielded from their participation in Eurodif?

We are implementing the resolutions of the Security Council.

(...)

Q - (The Iranians are also saying that French companies with operations in Iran don't want to be targeted by measures taken by the French government to discourage them from continuing to work in Iran Any comment?

We're working with French companies. When we take decisions, these also have repercussions at their level. The only thing that I want to say again here is that I really hope that the

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resumption of a real dialogue with the Iranians will lead to the re-establishment of confidence and lead to normal relations with Iran.

Our preference is for dialogue. We've always said that we combined dialogue and firmness, that sanctions are not an end in themselves. Our objective is the resumption of dialogue so that we have a normal, peaceable relationship with Iran. For this to happen we need confidence, and that confidence doesn't exist today.

End text of French MFA statements.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

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